

Fee Proposal Questions and Answers

What is Fish and Game proposing?

The Fee Adjustment proposal includes a modest increase in the price of licenses and tags to catch up with current costs and creates a new process for approval of future fee adjustments by the Fish and Game Commission and Idaho Legislature. The proposal does not include any new full time license funded positions for Fish and Game. The Department is requesting two new full time positions funded by other sources. The proposal keeps hunting and fishing affordable, while providing sufficient funds for Fish and Game to continue providing the services expected by hunters and anglers.

Where does Fish and Game get its money?

Fish and Game gets no money from state taxpayers through the state general fund. More than half of the Department funding (55%) comes from federal government contracts and other sources, the rest from license dollars (45%). More than half of the license revenue (55%) comes from non-residents. Idaho hunters and anglers provide less than 20 percent of the total Fish and Game budget through the purchase of resident licenses and tags.

When was the last fee increase?

The last fee adjustment took effect in May 2000. At that time, legislators, hunters, anglers and others were told that fees would have to go up again in July 2005, the start of Fiscal Year 2006. Fees must go up to continue funding services expected by hunters and anglers.

How did you use that money?

Prior to the last fee increase, the Department promised to take specific steps to improve hunting and fishing in Idaho. It has fulfilled its promises. Since 2000, Fish and Game has:

- Developed new fishing waters
- Repaired and improved Wildlife Management Areas
- Controlled noxious weeds on Department owned property
- Increased aerial surveys of game animals, providing better information for managing big game herds
- Repaired hatcheries
- Increased backcountry patrols by conservation officers
- Restored wildlife trapping and transplanting efforts
- Improved customer service

Why do you need more money?

Since the last fee adjustment, our cost for gasoline, utilities, salaries and insurance have increased. Like any business, the Department has taken steps to control costs. Unlike businesses, however, Fish and Game has not adjusted fees since 2000, in spite of rising expenses. For example, since 2000, unleaded gasoline has gone up 26 percent, more than 40 cents a gallon.

Why not cut costs?

Since the last fee adjustment, we have increased efficiency. We have changed the way we buy and manage our vehicles, motorized equipment and computers. Today, the Department has less motorized equipment (vehicles, outboard motors, tractors, heavy equipment, etc) than it did in 2000. Despite these efforts, additional revenue is needed to cover rising costs for utilities, gasoline, insurance, etc. The Department also identified a low-cost method of replacing outdated, inefficient office buildings.

In addition, our “savings account” is running out. After the last fee increase, the Fish and Game Commission put some of the revenue into a “savings account” to delay the need for another fee adjustment. As expenses have caught up with revenue, the Department has drawn money from the savings account, also known as the Budget Stabilization Account, to cover operating expenses. Expenses now exceed revenue, and the savings account is being drawn down. Without a fee adjustment, Fish and Game will have to cut costs, possibly by scaling back programs and/or personnel, to bring expenses into line with revenue. Even with a fee adjustment, the savings account will be entirely used to cover expenses during 2005 and 2006.

I see Fish and Game has new vehicles and is building new offices.

Since the last fee increase, Fish and Game has changed the way it purchases and manages our vehicles and other motorized equipment. The Department uses an approach similar to many businesses. Vehicles are replaced on a regular schedule. The used vehicles are sold at an auction and that money is used to purchase new vehicles. This means conservation officers and others have safer, more reliable vehicles, takes advantage of manufacturer warranty for repair costs and has resulted in the Department having fewer vehicles, outboard motors, tractors and heavy equipment than it did a few years ago.

The Department identified a low-cost way to replace outdated, inefficient office buildings. The non-profit Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation took advantage of record low interest rates to pay for construction of the new buildings. The buildings will be energy efficient and will meet all federal standards for access by handicapped individuals. The Department will lease the buildings and will own them when the loans are paid off in 20 years.

How much do you want to raise fees?

This is a modest adjustment in fees. Resident hunting licenses would cost \$1.50 more, less than one gallon of gas. Fishing licenses would cost \$3 more, about the price of a basic Mepps spinner. Sample amounts are listed below:

Resident License Type	Current	Proposed	Difference
Hunting	\$11.50	\$13.00	\$1.50
Fishing	\$23.50	\$26.50	\$3.00
Combination	\$30.50	\$34.50	\$4.00
Elk tag	\$28.50	\$32.25	\$3.75
Deer tag	\$18.00	\$20.25	\$2.25
Turkey	\$18.00	\$20.25	\$2.25
Moose/Sheep/Goat	\$151.50	\$172.00	\$20.50

Non Resident License Type	Current	Proposed	Difference
Hunting	\$128.50	\$146.00	\$17.50
Fishing	\$74.50	\$84.50	\$10.00
Combination	\$181.50	\$204.50	\$24.50
Elk	\$338.50	\$384.75	\$46.25
Deer	\$235.00	\$267.00	\$32.00
Turkey	\$61.50	\$69.75	\$8.25
Moose/Sheep/Goat	\$1,501.50	\$1,707.00	\$205.50

How does this compare to other states?

Idaho residents will still pay less to hunt than most of their neighbors. Resident hunters in Idaho will continue to pay less to hunt deer, elk and small game than their neighbors in 7 of 11 Western states.

What about nonresidents?

Nonresidents will still pay more to hunt and fish in Idaho than in nearly all Western states. Nonresident deer hunters will pay more to hunt in Idaho than to hunt in 9 Western states. Nonresident elk hunters will pay more to hunt elk in Idaho than in 7 Western states. Nonresident anglers will pay more to fish in Idaho than in 8 neighboring states.

How does this compare to other recreational activities?

Hunting and fishing will still be affordable. Hunting and fishing will still be a bargain compared to other recreational activities. An entire season of hunting and fishing will still cost less than one day of downhill skiing. One afternoon of golf will cost more than an entire season deer hunting. A night at the movies will cost more than a season fishing license. Sample comparisons are listed below.

1 Day Ski Pass	\$38.50
Golf – 18 Holes – Public Course	\$25.00
Night at Movies for Two	\$26.50
Park and Ski Pass	\$25.00
VIP Park Pass	\$49.00
Box 30.06 Shell	\$15.00
Box 12 Gauge Shells	\$9.00
Walleye Crank Bait	\$5.00
Mepps Spinner	\$3.00
12 Dry Flies	\$15.00
Spool 4X Tippit	\$5.00

How will you use the money?

The fee adjustment helps “catch up” with increased costs and provides services requested by hunters and anglers. The proposal will bring in an estimated \$4 million more in additional revenue annually. More than \$2 million is needed to “catch up” due to rising

costs since the last fee increase. Another \$1.4 million will cover the anticipated increase in costs due to inflation, salaries, insurance and additional operating expenses. All state agencies have been directed to budget for these anticipated costs. The proposal includes about \$610,000 to address high priority needs identified by the public during the Department's strategic planning process.

Fixed Increased Costs	
Inflation	\$650,000
Salaries	\$105,000
27 th pay period	\$638,000
Subtotal	\$1,393,000
Historic Increased Expenses	
(Inflation, Salaries, Utilities, Insurance, etc)	\$2,000,000
Subtotal	\$2,000,000
Public Priorities	
Continue to Grow Access Yes Program	\$ 150,000
Improve public communications	\$ 100,000
Improve public involvement	\$ 100,000
Upgrade regional wildlife criminal investigation	\$ 75,000
Enhance Mule Deer management	\$ 186,000
Subtotal	\$611,000
Total	\$4,004,000

How did you decide where to use the money?

Hunters and anglers helped set these priorities. As part of its strategic planning process, Fish and Game asked hunters, anglers and others to help set priorities. More than 3,000 hunters and anglers were surveyed and hundreds of hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, businesses, legislators and others participated in focus groups to help set these priorities. Hunters, anglers and others told Fish and Game to get tough on poaching, tell them more about fish and wildlife, get them involved and give them more places to hunt and fish. Hunters also encouraged Fish and Game to take action to enhance mule deer populations. Those public priorities are included in the proposal.

We listened to hunters and anglers and we acted. Fish and Game shifted money into the priorities identified by the public. A modest fee adjustment will put more resources into the areas where hunters and anglers said we needed to improve. The proposal:

- **Gives hunters and anglers more places to hunt and fish.**
The proposal expands the *Access Yes* program, which provides public access to private property. *Access Yes* was proposed by a group of farmers, ranchers, hunters and anglers as a way to increase hunting and fishing opportunities on private land. During its first year in 2003, *Access Yes* increased hunting and

fishing opportunities by opening 107,000 acres of private land and 240,000 acres of public land to hunters and anglers. In 2004, *Access Yes* opened 220,000 acres of private land and more than 250,000 acres of public land to hunting and fishing. The \$150,000 in additional funding will give hunters and anglers access to an additional 120,000 acres of private land.

- **Gives hunters and anglers more information about hunting and fishing and gets them involved in managing fish and wildlife.**

The proposal gives hunters and anglers more opportunities to get involved in activities benefiting fish and wildlife, expands educational programs and increases the information available to hunters and anglers. The additional \$100,000 will provide:

- Part time volunteer coordinators in Regions 2, 4 and 6. Currently, only Regions 1, 3 and 5 have dedicated volunteer coordinators. In 2003, volunteers contributed more than 50,000 hours worth more than \$775,000 in time and effort surveying sage grouse leks, staffing check stations, teaching classes and participating in other activities to benefit fish and wildlife.
- Part time wildlife educators in the Clearwater Region and eastern Idaho to visit classrooms to teach about fish and wildlife. These programs already exist in the Panhandle and Southwest Region, teaching thousands of students per year about fish and wildlife.
- A part time writer to produce additional material for distribution to the public. This will allow Fish and Game to meet increased public demand for information about fish and wildlife.

- **Gives hunters and anglers more of a voice in fish and wildlife management.**

A frequent criticism of Fish and Game is that we only listen to our “friends” or those with the loudest voice. This proposal will help find out what the average hunter or angler wants and will increase their opportunity to influence fish and wildlife management. The addition of \$100,000 will provide in-house expertise to help collect and analyze hunter and angler opinions about various options for managing fish and wildlife.

- **Gets tough on poachers by targeting hardcore poachers who steal fish and wildlife.**

The proposal will allow conservation officers to focus on the most flagrant poaching cases. Seven existing conservation officer positions will be upgraded to new investigator positions. The investigators will concentrate on poaching cases. Catching hardcore poachers can take hundreds of hours of investigation, which is difficult to do given the workload of most conservation officers. The proposal, which also increases the time conservation officers can be out patrolling, makes it possible for officers to advance their careers while remaining in the same area and increases their ability to solve cases. It will allow them to continue to work in familiar terrain and retain their contacts

and working relationships with other law enforcement agencies and the community. The additional \$75,000 will greatly expand the Department's ability to enforce fish and wildlife violations.

- **Helps mule deer.**

The proposal enhances the Department's ability to work with private landowners, state and federal land management agencies, volunteers, groups and others to improve conditions for mule deer. Mule deer have declined across much of the western United States, including Idaho. The Mule Deer Initiative aims at sustaining and, where possible, improving mule deer populations and hunting opportunities. The additional \$186,000 will help improve habitat on at least 10,000 acres, benefiting mule deer, sharp-tail grouse, sage grouse and other species.

- **Maintains core services for hunters and anglers.**

A modest fee adjustment maintains services hunters and anglers expect. It will keep hatcheries operating and trucks running to stock rivers, lakes and streams so people can share love of fishing with children. It will keep conservation officers patrolling to catch poachers who steal fish and wildlife. It will allow Fish and Game to expand monitoring of big game herds and enhance research efforts to assess the effect of predators, including wolves, habitat and other factors on game populations. It will provide stable funding to manage wildlife to provide a variety of opportunities.

What about future fee increases?

In the future, hunters and anglers will see smaller, gradual increases, rather than substantial increases every seven to ten years. Despite efforts by Fish and Game to hold down expenses, it simply is costing more and more to provide the services hunters and anglers expect. Currently, fees are set by statute. Historically, fee increases have been based on projected costs several years in the future, meaning hunters and anglers see a substantial price increase. This "sticker shock" can upset license buyers and may cause some hunters and anglers to drop out. Smaller, more frequent increases of 25-50 cents are anticipated. The legislation limits resident fee increases to a maximum of five-percent in any one year. These gradual increases would reduce buyer resistance while providing stable funding to maintain services.

Why should the Commission be allowed to set fees?

The proposal provides stable funding to maintain services expected by hunters and anglers. Under the current process, when a fee increase is not approved, funding for important activities is cut. Programs are reduced, staff is reassigned or let go, and critical equipment is not replaced or repaired. This affects services that many hunters and anglers consider priorities. After a fee increase is approved and in response to public demand, the Department tries to restore at least some of the cuts. Often, this costs considerably more because of the need to recruit and retrain employees and, in some cases, purchase new equipment. This cycle is extremely inefficient and results in significant disruption of service to hunters and anglers.

What if I have an opinion about a fee increase?

The proposal will increase public involvement. Before adjusting fees, the Fish and Game Commission will hear from fellow hunters and anglers. Each year, the Commission will review the budget and determine how much, if any fee adjustment may be necessary. Hunters and anglers will be part of this discussion. They will provide feedback on the budget and be involved in discussions about how to pay for programs.

What will be the role of the Idaho Legislature?

Idaho Code requires approval by both houses of the Legislature before a fee increase by any state agency can take effect. Under the proposal, the Commission would set the Department budget in mid-summer and would propose a rule adjusting fees. In January, the legislature would consider the proposed rule. If approved, the adjustment would take effect the following year.

How high will prices go?

The proposal will set a maximum price for all licenses and tags. The proposal will allow the Commission to set fees up to a maximum price for a license or tag. That maximum amount will be written into law and will be based on historic and projected inflation rates and previous increases in the price of licenses and tags. If the Commission proposes going above that upper limit, legislation will be required specifically setting a new upper limit. Based on current programs and historic inflation rates, it is unlikely that the upper limit will be reached for about a decade. Sample maximum amounts are listed below:

Resident License Type	Current	Proposed	Maximum
Hunting	\$11.50	\$13.00	\$14.50
Fishing	\$23.50	\$26.50	\$31.00
Combination	\$30.50	\$34.50	\$41.00
Elk tag	\$28.50	\$32.25	\$38.00
Deer tag	\$18.00	\$20.25	\$23.50
Turkey tag	\$18.00	\$20.25	\$23.50
Moose/Sheep/Goat	\$151.50	\$172.00	\$210.00
Non Resident License Type	Current	Proposed	Maximum
Hunting	\$128.50	\$146.00	\$178.50
Fishing	\$74.50	\$84.50	\$102.50
Combination	\$181.50	\$204.50	\$253.25
Elk tag	\$338.50	\$384.75	\$474.00
Deer tag	\$235.00	\$267.00	\$328.50
Turkey tag	\$61.50	\$69.75	\$84.50
Moose/Sheep/Goat	\$1,501.50	\$1,707.00	\$2,108.50

What will keep prices under control?

Fish and Game will run “like a business.” The price of licenses and tags will be in line with costs. The proposal will require the Commission to carefully consider each and every fee adjustment and the possible effect on sales. This free market approach recognizes that people have many ways to spend their recreational dollar. Recognition of this fact will give the Commission the incentive to strike a balance between services provided and the price. Simply put, if the price of licenses gets too high, people will stop buying. In addition, the legislation limits resident fee increases to a maximum of five-percent in any one year.

Why should I support this?

The proposal makes sense. It keeps hunting and fishing affordable. It provides stable funding to continue the services hunters and anglers expect. It increases public involvement, while maintaining legislative oversight of the Fish and Game budget and fees.